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Random Ramblings -- The Digital Divide

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purchasing. This is now done via email attachment, as well with electronic signatures.

Using a vendor-specific purchasing card changes the payment process for that one specific vendor and requires it to be paperless. Although the payment process is now paperless, there is still a need for documentation for review purposes.

Streamlining

Cross-training offers the opportunity for a fresh look at the processes of Acquisitions' jobs. It provides an opportunity to question processes and propose different ways of doing things, or the possible removal of some steps in order to streamline workflow. It is also an important element for creating a more efficient department. If a staff member is out unexpectedly or for a long period of time, a fellow employee can take care of a job duty that needs attention right away or tend to job duties so work does not pile up for the employee who is out of the office. It is also helpful during periods of heavy workload because more than one employee can work toward completing the job. Examples of this are when a large number of books need to be ordered, or when purchase orders need to be completed for all items that renew at the beginning of the fiscal or calendar year.

In order to better communicate and track workflow, we created a shared folder for the department. This allows all staff members to have access to all files stored in this folder. Items in the folder include, but are not limited to, a pending report, invoices, a list of purchase order numbers, frequently-used forms, and training manuals. The shared folder enhances continuity of workflow. If an employee is out and a document they have been working on is needed, it is available to the rest of us in the department.

We are compiling a vendor contact list. It is a work-in-progress because of the changes of vendor representatives. This is another document that is in the shared folder. It allows any employee in the department to make changes to the list as new information becomes available.

We now schedule weekly meetings in the Acquisitions department. This is a chance for employees of this department to meet face-to-face and discuss what has been completed since the last meeting and what is to be completed before the next meeting or at a later date. We follow up each meeting with a summary of the meeting that is emailed to each staff member. The summary serves as a reminder to check on the progress of projects. The meeting also serves as a time to bring up any issues related to the department or that will affect the majority of the staff in the department. It also aids in teamwork.

The retirement of a long-term employee provides opportunity to evaluate the workflow within the department and, more specifically, within the duties of that position. The retirement of an employee also brings about the possibility of new ideas from a new

employee. Much like with cross-training, a fresh look at job processes from a new employee can benefit the department. This takes time as the employee learns the aspects of the job. Often, duties in Acquisitions happen and need to be dealt with once a year. Examples are the creation of a purchase order for a specific vendor and subscription renewals with a specific vendor.

We approached much of the change with a positive attitude and a sense of humor. One thing we have to laugh about is who has created the purchase order that has been rejected by the system the most times. I also provided guidance and made sure my staff had the needed training in order to perform their job duties.

Vendor Changes

Changes in vendor practices also affect Acquisitions departments. Along with buyouts and closures of companies and offices, customer service can be changed from one office location to another or even from one person to another in the same office. This requires adjustments for everyone, including learning to work with new vendor representatives. The change of procedures in the same office can also affect how we do our jobs. The start of vendors sending electronic invoices caused the Acquisitions department to change how invoices were delivered to our Accounts Payable department. We also have to accommodate those vendors who do not use electronic invoices yet by scanning and emailing the invoice to our Accounts Payable department.

Future in Acquisitions

In the future, I see the Acquisitions department having the potential for the use of electronic communication tools. Among the possibilities are task managers, wikis, collaborative software, instant messaging, and social bookmarking. The staff of an Acquisitions department face many deadlines, and a task manager helps with meeting those deadlines by using it to set up

email reminders. A wiki allows all staff to have access to department information in one spot. It is also a place to log information technology problems and tips. It enables staff members to work together on a project using collaborative software. Edits and comments can be made in real time, which can produce a document more quickly than waiting for each person to have the time to review a document and pass it on to another employee multiple times. Instant messaging can be used for interactive communication among staff. This allows for immediacy of communication, rather than waiting for an email to be answered. When staff members are traveling to branch locations, conferences, or training sessions, a social bookmarking service provides access to links of saved Web pages from multiple computers.

One concern about these ideas is the possibility of technology being a barrier to communication. Before even thinking about whether or not a message is going to be communicated clearly, the staff need to be willing to adopt the technology and then have a willingness to become proficient with the technology.

Another idea for the future is to bring in employees from TTUHSC's three branch libraries to see first-hand how processes are completed in acquisitions. Operations have the potential to work more smoothly if all those involved have the best understanding possible of workflow. It is also important for fellow employees to know who handles which tasks within the department. In addition, it is important for Acquisitions staff to understand the needs of each branch library.

Many of the changes in the Acquisitions department at TTUHSC are a result of institutional decisions. However, a number of steps in different job processes are being redefined or eliminated by staff. The future holds the possibility of more change within the department for the sake of efficiency. 🌱



Random Ramblings — The Digital Divide

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Michael Stephens, an Assistant Professor at the **Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Dominican University**, gave the first plenary session on Saturday morning during the 2009 **Charleston Conference**. In his talk, "Hyperlinked Library Services: Trends, Tools, and Transparency," he painted a glowing picture of what technology could do to improve library services. To quote the description in the conference program:

The **Hyperlinked Library** is an open, participatory institution that welcomes user input and creativity. It is built on human connections and conversations.... Librarians are tapped in to user spaces and places online to interact, have presence, and point the way.... This presentation provides a roadmap toward becoming the **Hyperlinked Library**: transparent, participatory, playful, user-centered and human....

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His accompanying slides showed a wonderful world of interconnectivity with **Kindles**, smart phones, **Facebook**, **Twitter**, and other new marvels. The library connects with patrons, and patrons connect to the library in a new technologically-enhanced way. What a wonderful way to enhance library services!

As I sat in the audience applauding this vision of a new era in library service, a sudden doubt entered my mind. I live in Michigan where the unemployment rate hovers around 15%, where families are losing their homes, and where people wonder where they'll get their next meal. Will these users be able to enjoy hyperlinked library service? Do they have the needed computers, smart phones, and broadband Internet connections? To answer the last question, "currently, more than **500,000 households** in the state of Michigan do not have access to broadband" according to the **[Michigan] State Broadband Planning Commission**. **Michael's** second slide says that "library resources are for all." How do these users whose only fault is having the bad luck of losing their jobs or of being born into poverty fit into this vision? Are they somehow excluded from the "all?" Do libraries assume that they don't exist since they can't call the library on their cell phones or log in on their high-speed Internet connections? After the talk, I went to the microphone and asked this question. I admire greatly **Michael Stephens** for not brushing aside my concerns and for talking to me at length during the next break. We didn't come up with any easy solutions, but at least the question was raised. (As an aside, **Michael's** 77 MB **PowerPoint** presentation from the **Charleston Conference** took ten minutes to download on my medium fast Internet connection and would have been practically inaccessible with dial-up.)

Today's students at all levels are severely handicapped without a decent computer and broadband access at home. One obvious disadvantage is that they can't take online courses, though they often need them the most if they live in rural areas without a decent college. These are the areas, however, where Internet access is pricey and slow. Even traditional students most likely will be expected to use classroom management software like **Blackboard** or **WebCT** to get their assignments, submit them, collaborate with group members, and other tasks. Just last Thursday during winter orientation for my school, the blunt answer to a student who asked if he could get by with dial in access was "no."

Students who live on or commute regularly to campus can use its computer labs. I met with **Nancy Beals**, the electronic resources librarian at **Wayne State University**, to get a clearer picture of what students could do or not do in these labs. The good news here is that students can download journal articles to their flash drives if they have a computer at home, even without an Internet connection. The bad news is that eBooks, in our system at least, are available only online. I would suggest that libraries

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take this fact into account as they switch over to digital monographs. I would further suggest that academic libraries buy heavily-used books in both formats, but I doubt that many will due to declining budgets.

Even in the best of cases, being forced to use a computer lab at school is like having one hand tied behind your back. While wealthier peers work from home, the poorer students without adequate technology must use the library's computers, find computer access elsewhere on campus, or head for the public library. Compare a student with home computer access rolling out of bed at 7:00 am

to find the last few online resources to complete a paper due at 2:30 pm with the technologically bereft student having to come to campus to do the same. For poorer commuting students, extra trips to access digital resources can mean taking the bus, bumming a ride, and spending precious funds on gasoline and parking.

If readers think that the vast majority of households have Internet access, think again. The July 2008 *Pew Internet & American Life* reported that "55% of adult Americans have broadband Internet connections at home, up from 47% who had high-speed access at home

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last year at this time.” Even if access has increased since last year and even if students are more likely to have access than non-students, these figures suggest that a significant number of college students can’t use their online library resources from home. Since the conference, I’ve been asking librarian guest speakers in my academic libraries course about students without home computers. Their response has been unanimous: they encounter many students for whom campus access is the only alternative.

Beyond the campus, the public library used to be the great equalizer. A poor kid whose parents couldn’t afford to buy books could check them out from the local library, take them home, read them, and then go back for more. A voracious reader could at least partially overcome the disadvantage of less than adequate schools and gain the knowledge and skills needed to get into a good college or land a good job. Large public libraries might even provide more convenient resources for college students, at least for undergraduates. While books remain for reading in the public library, access to scholarly online resources beyond those suitable for high school is less likely. Furthermore, some public libraries allow access only to information resources and don’t make available the software such as word processing and spreadsheets needed to

complete assignments. Finally, according to *Public Libraries and the Internet 2009: Study Results and Findings*, around 18% don’t allow users to connect flash drives to public library computers, so the students can’t store their work or information findings for later use.

A digital divide that hinders getting educated is especially troublesome in these difficult economic times when employers require more skills and higher degrees. Detroit, where I live, used to be a place where a high school graduate could get a job that supported a middle class lifestyle. Manufacturing jobs moved abroad, and the remaining ones pay much less than they used to. My university’s enrollment is reasonably steady even in these tough times because area residents are getting more education in hopes of bettering their lives. While upward mobility in America has often been more of a myth than a reality, America nonetheless needs a better educated work force to compete in the global economy. Hindering intelligent, talented students whose only fault is being poor from accessing library resources to complete the assignments that will lead to academic success, needed skills, and required degrees seems to me a violation of the American social contract, if not an outright denial of the American dream.

This article has come a long way from the optimistic view of the digital future painted by **Michael Stephens** to a gloomy prediction of a permanent underclass from the lack of computer access and skills. **Michael** and I didn’t come up with an answer in Charleston.

I still don’t have one now. I would suggest that all libraries, but especially academic libraries, think about those students without computers and perhaps more importantly without broadband Internet access as they implement new services that move away from print to digital. I do have a few suggestions. Buy the extra copy of an important book in print even if the library already has a digital copy. Make sure that students can download to their flash drives even if doing so increases security risks. Have enough fast computers somewhere on campus for all who need to use them. Maximize the library Website for speedy loading and subscribe to electronic resources that do the same in the hopes that some students might get by with a dial-up connection. I’m sure that others could come up with additional suggestions. I agree that digital is the future of academic libraries, but libraries could at least recognize that the change has a downside for some users.

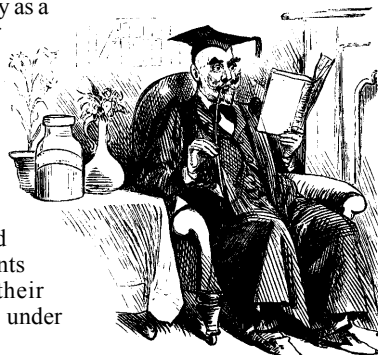
I’ll close by confessing why this issue is so important to me. I grew up in a lower middle class family where money was tight. Through hard work, scholarships, and the help of public and academic libraries, I received a doctorate from **Yale University** and a masters in library science from **Columbia University**. I’d like hard working, intelligent students who are unlucky enough to be poor to have the same opportunities. To do so, they need to find a way to cross the digital divide. We should take it upon ourselves as individuals and as a profession to help them make it. 🌱

From the University Presses — Georgia State and (Un)Fair Use: A Rebuttal to Kenneth Crews

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The suit brought on April 15, 2008, by three academic publishers — the presses of **Cambridge** and **Oxford** universities and the commercial house **Sage** — against **Georgia State University** is wending its way through the legal process of the federal court of the Northern District of Georgia, and it may be several months yet before any judicial opinion is forthcoming. But the case has already included an interesting intervention by **Columbia** professor **Kenneth D.**

Crews, well-known to many as a frequent lecturer and writer on copyright issues and the long-time head of **Indiana University’s Copyright Management Center** in Indianapolis, which produced a great deal of very useful educational material aimed at helping graduate students and faculty understand their rights and responsibilities under copyright law.



The law firm of **King & Spalding** representing the defendants in the case commissioned **Crews** to prepare an “expert report” on copyright law and fair use as it pertains to the policies and practices carried on at **Georgia State**, and initially a 72-page document was submitted to the court on June 1, 2009. After responses were provided by the plaintiffs and their attorneys, **Crews** completed a rebuttal, filed on November 2. These are the

two documents that will be the main focus of this article. They are accessible at **Peter Hirtle’s LibraryLaw** blog here: <http://blog.librarylaw.com/library-law/2009/11/crews-important-studies-on-ere-serves.html>.

First it may be helpful to lay out the background to this suit, briefly. Concern among publishers about the way

that e-reserve systems were developing in libraries, threatening to take the place of print coursepacks, began to grow in the early 1990s. The first formal effort to reach some consensus about how e-reserve systems should function took place within the context of the **Conference on Fair Use (CONFU)**, convened in September 1994 as part of the **Clinton Administration’s National Information Infrastructure Initiative**. (A useful summary of **CONFU** is available here: <http://www.utsystem.edu/ogc/intellectualproperty/confu2.htm>.) E-reserves was one of five topics the **CONFU** participants discussed, but perhaps the most contentious, so much so that no recommendation about it was included in the final report of November 1998.

While **Crews** acknowledges his role in the **CONFU** process as someone who “participated in that subgroup” that developed the Fair Use Guidelines for Electronic Reserve Systems (*Expert Report*, p. 25), he is being far too modest. In fact, **Crews** was recruited to be the principal drafter of those guidelines.

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